CALGARY metro®

NEWS WORTH SHARING.

City backs 'on-demand' limo service

Proposal. New model would open door for apps like UberBlack

City officials are shifting gears and now advocating the rollout of an "on-demand" limo service, one that could improve customer service and pave the way for apps like UberBlack.

A pitch to industry stakeholders, discussed at a subcommittee meeting of the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee (TLAC) Tuesday, marks a potential move away from rigid bylaws requiring that all luxury limos and sedans charge a minimum fare of $84.60 and pre-arrange rides with customers a minimum of 30 minutes in advance.

The new proposal, one that could be given the green light by city council before this year's busy Calgary Stampede, would allow sedan companies to declare themselves "on-demand" service providers and enable them to operate in much the same manner as taxis.

Those companies, however, would still be required to charge a "premium rate" and take steps to enhance safety, including installing security cameras, requiring drivers to keep detailed trip logs and undergoing "enhanced" training.

Marcia Andreychuk, a business analyst in the city's livery department, said the on-demand cars, working alongside standard taxis and potential future late-night Calgary Transit service endeavours, could help ease a "mass transit problem" that sees thousands of bar patrons flood sidewalks on Friday and Saturday nights in search of a ride.

"During regular (demand) periods, most people would pick a taxi because a taxi's going to be cheaper, but at a peak period you would have a choice if there are no taxis available," she said. "The question is: will you pay a premium for a limo?"

Details of the premium luxury-ride rates are still to be hammered down, but some industry representatives are vouching for an initial fee of between $29 and $50 — taxi customers pay $3.80 upfront — and then a per-kilometre rate that is 25 per cent above the amount taxi brokerages are required to charge.

Even then, the cost for a short jaunt in a limo could come in well below the current minimum fare for a luxury ride.

The new offering could also open an avenue for Uber to bring its UberBlack luxury-service app to the city. Officials with the popular company, which offers technology allowing customers to link directly to drivers using their smartphone, have long deemed Calgary's limo regulations archaic.

JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO

SEX(ISM), DRUGS AND CITY HALL

Mayor Naheed Nenshi faced an unusually large throng of reporters, TV cameras and microphones Tuesday after a priorities and finance committee meeting that quickly turned into a forum for members of council to level allegations of inappropriate drinking, sexism and even illegal narcotic possession at one another. Story, page 8. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

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Calgary moms ship food to families in pricey North

Spreading goodwill. Momentum building among Canadians to help northern families with food shipments

JEREMY NOLAIS
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Rishma Somji, Danielle Devine, Kristina Peters and Wendy Gold with several items that will serve as the start of a northern-neighbours care package. The group will then ship the box of food to a family struggling with the high costs of northern living located in the small community of Coral Harbour, Nunavut.
MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

It wasn't long ago that Calgary mother of two Danielle Devine scoffed at the $2.99 price tag for a cucumber at her neighbourhood Safeway.

Then she started reading about the struggles to keep food on the table in far-north Canadian hamlets like Coral Harbour, Nunavut.

"I don't think you can even get cucumbers past Yellowknife (the capital of the Northwest Territories) right now," she said. "There's very little availability of fresh stuff … and the prices are just crazy."

The $20 head of cabbage and $15 bag of apples being sold in Nunavut became symbols of past protests staged by frustrated northern residents.

Some subsidies are provided for those living in the North, but Statistics Canada studies have shown the Inuit population earns, on average, $40,000 less than non-aboriginals in the region.

Momentum has been building among more southern-dwelling Canadians to support their peer families with food shipments.

A Facebook group called Helping Our Northern Neighbours, launched by B.C. resident Jennifer Gwilliam, has more than 9,000 followers. She also maintains a list of families in dire need of food and other toiletries.

Wanting to help, Devine turned to Gwilliam and was set up with Royden Eetuk and his Coral Harbour family. The hamlet is home to only a few more than 800 residents.

Devine, with the help of her kids, decorated a box and packed it full of food, everything from peanut butter to dried apricots and other items that either aren't available in Coral Harbour or priced at a premium, seemingly because of the effort required to ship them there.

On Tuesday, the package arrived at Eetuk's home.

"Your efforts and contributions will not go unnoticed," he wrote to Devine in a message on Facebook that accompanied a photo of his three-year-old son Zdeno Max with the pile of donated food.

Quoted

"I don't think you can even get cucumbers past Yellowknife right now. There's very little availability of fresh stuff … and the prices are just crazy."

Danielle Devine, Calgary mom and Helping Our Northern Neighbours member

"Someday might not be right away, but you will all be surely rewarded," Eetuk added.

Devine said on her tight budget she would have only been able to support the Eetuk family a handful of times annually, but she's recently teamed up with three other moms, including Kristina Peters.

Peters has sponsored a young girl living in Ghana through Compassion Canada but said she was "astounded" to learn of the food crisis brewing much closer to home.

She said the plan is to send a food shipment to the Eetuk household every month.

"I can't do a whole village but I can do one person, and if everybody does that, it adds up," she said.

"Every family in these northern areas that needs a food box should get a food box, and that's achievable with a team," she added.

Calgary's Marie-Anne Levert, who helped organize donations in the wake of the historic 2013 flood, has also launched a local Helping Our Northern Neighbours Facebook page.

WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

Wildrose wants Federal Building sold to cut costs

The Wildrose party says if Premier Jim Prentice needs to cut costs to save the economy, he can start by selling the biggest white elephant on the Alberta legislature grounds: the Federal Building.

Shayne Saskiw, Wildrose house leader, says the building is not needed and only serves to showcase the reckless excess of the Progressive Conservatives.

"The government must seriously consider selling this grotesque model of waste and mismanagement," Saskiw told a news conference Tuesday, as he stood in the shadow of the building, just up the hill from the legislature.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Lethbridge

University wants to build cryogenic testing facility

Cue the Star Wars soundtrack, as the University of Lethbridge is gearing up to head out to space with a new cryogenic testing facility (CTF). With a $150,000 donation from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the university is one step closer to its goal. METRO

Highway 2

Gasoline tanker flips north of Calgary

Airdrie RCMP closed Highway 2 for hours Tuesday after a tanker carrying gasoline flipped on its side at about 4 a.m. Const. Jason Curtis said the tanker entered into the centre median, causing the truck to flip over. No one was injured. METRO

Children's hospital

No appeal for man convicted of sex offenses

A former Alberta Children's Hospital worker who was convicted of sex-related offences against young girls has had his appeal denied. Ronald Arthur Sayers claimed the nature of the touching wasn't major and his sentence should be reduced. THE CANADIAN PRESS

East Village prepares for moving day

Development.
Residents expected to settle in their new homes in mid-2015

HELEN PIKE
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The ever-changing East Village is preparing to welcome its first big batch of condo residents since construction began.

In May and August, 800 condo residents will begin their long-awaited migration to the village — with nearly 11,000 residents to follow.

Michael Brown, president and CEO of CMLC, said some of the key points for 2015 will be delivering on the St. Patrick's Island development and working on getting a grocery store, namely Loblaws, in the village.

"Those in downtown Calgary and the east side are looking forward to that grocery store," said Brown.

Friends Ken Peach, Kelly Ernst and Gary Courtney will be among the first to move into the East Village. The trio will make the big move once their respective condos are complete in May and June.

"We were apparently one of the first to purchase with Embassy Bosa, and that's two-and-a-half years ago," Peach said. "For me, it's the facilities around, the river walk and just being out and about running into people ... that sort of thing."

Parcels of land are almost all sold off. Construction of rental properties will soon get underway at one of the last sections of Block R at the southeast corner of 7th Avenue and 5th Street S.E. Cidex Developments Ltd. will develop the neighbourhood's first residential rental project at an estimated value of $100 million.

"It's a mixed product, so we have a variety of units," said Abed Itani, president of Cidex Developments. "The reason we're introducing three bedrooms is because we believe in families living in the inner city."

Rentals will be a mix of studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom properties. Itani added the building will include a daycare and other retail to bring more support to the community.

Peach said he's excited about the rental project and thinks it'll bring diversity to the East Village.

"I'm pleased to see the three-bedroom units; that will add another dynamic to the community and ... (when) you see different people coming and going, I think it will just maintain the liveliness of the area," said Peach.

Developers are waiting for permits, but once construction is underway the East Village is expected to have rental apartments in late 2017.

From left: Kelly Ernst, Gary Courtney and Ken Peach are among the first condo owners who will move into the East Village this year. HELEN PIKE/METRO

Call new provincial phone line to report rats

Dead rats recovered from traps near Medicine Hat's landfill in 2012.
CONTRIBUTED

Although officials have long claimed that Alberta is "rat free," they have launched a hotline to report vermin sightings.

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) has listed the new number, 310-RATS (7287), in response to time delays in past reported sightings.

Every year, about 100 to 150 rat sightings are reported in Alberta, with 30 to 40 coming from Calgary alone.

Phil Merrill, a provincial rat and pest specialist who's worked in the field for 43 years, said 99 per cent of those reports are false alarms.

Many "rats" turn out to be misidentified pocket gophers, which stay underground most of the year, he said. Most often, however, they're juvenile muskrats, which Merrill describes as "very similar to a rat."

"You almost have to have them in hand to tell the difference," he said.

"When we get a heavy chinook like we had this last week, we get quite a few calls on muskrats because they start to move to look for a new home."

In 2014 there were 16 confirmed rat reports in Alberta, compared to 12 in 2013, but Christina Bruce, spokeswoman for ARD, said Alberta is still considered "rat free."

"'Rat free' means that we don't tolerate rats, there's no permanent population of rats and we don't let them establish themselves," she said.

All reports — even false ones — are good news to Merrill, however, because it means people are looking.

"We have to have the help of Albertans to stay rat free because we just don't have enough officers to see everything," he said.

JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

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Cut Red Tape a success: Nenshi

Forty measures to "cut red tape" have saved the City of Calgary more than $12 million since 2011 and Calgarians countless hours of wasted time and frustration, Mayor Naheed Nenshi said Tuesday.

"Parents can now register for recreation programs at the recreation centre … something that was not available before," the mayor said, citing one of the dozens of changes since the Cut Red Tape program was launched.

It's also easier to get a pet licence now, the mayor noted, and making a 311 service request can now be done via the increasingly popular mobile app.

"For home builders, the e-construction process means you can now post your drawings online so you don't have to come to city hall with big drawings that get scanned and distributed," Nenshi said. "Not only is it easier for you, it's easier for the city."

The program will now be transferred from the mayor's office and into the purview of city manager Jeff Fielding.

"We need to integrate this program into what we do on a day-to-day basis," Fielding said.

Richard Truscott with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Alberta branch, said he's been happy with the program so far but is "a little bit nervous" about the program shifting out of the mayor's office.

"Let's hope the Cut Red Tape project is given a good home by the city manager and not relegated to an old couch in the basement," he said.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

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SAIT POLYTECHNIC

Christina Shackleford, left, Kathy Galenzoski and Kathy Cross take part in the parent-led effort to keep the Juno Beach Academy going. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

Parents in it to save Juno

Alternative school.
Recruitment push a last-ditch effort for academy facing closure

JEREMY NOLAIS
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Parents of children attending a one-of-a-kind city academy that focuses on Canada's history and military achievements are being given one last shot to boost enrolment before its doors are closed for good.

In the fall, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) informed the roughly 120 families with kids attending the Juno Beach Academy of Canadian Studies that the 2014-15 school year could be its last. There is also the option of amalgamating the program into Queen Elizabeth High School.

Enrolment has declined sharply in recent years at the academy, but parents contend that the CBE hasn't done enough to promote the alternative program offered.

They've now been handed the reins to a recruitment push ahead of a final recommendation in February from CBE officials to elected trustees, who would ultimately vote on whether the program should cease to exist.

Kathy Cross, chair of the academy's parent council, said efforts to save the program will culminate in an open house planned for Thursday night.

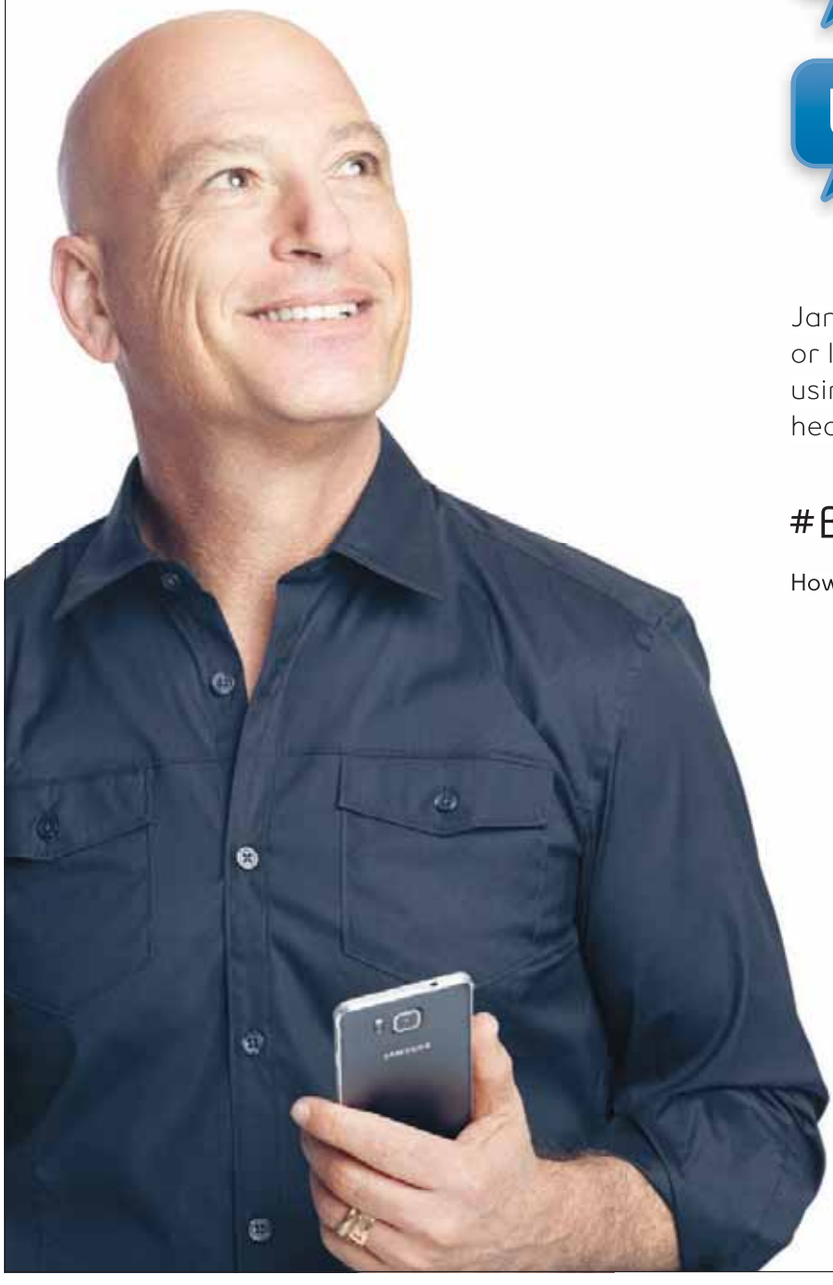
"This is our make it or break it," Cross said. "If we don't get the turnout and the commitment from families for at least Grade 7 and Grade 10 (feeder grades for middle and high school), we know what the outcome's going to be for the first week of February."

Veterans' advocates have contended that appreciation of Canada's history could take a hit without the academy; students at Juno do fundraisers for the Calgary Poppy Fund and lay wreaths on Remembrance Day.

Mykayla Work graduated from the academy in 2013 and is now enrolled in the disability-studies program at Bow Valley College. She said she was "really disappointed" to learn about Juno's potential fate.

In detail

- **Enrolment.** The Calgary Board of Education said Juno Beach needs 25 students at each grade level for a total population of 150. In 2008, it had a peak of 195 students.
- **Open house.** Thursday's open house runs from 7 to 9 p.m. at 315 86th Ave. S.W.



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Howie Mandel

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Airport. Border agency seizes $38K in $20 bills

More than $38,000 in the form of $20 bills was seized by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) at Calgary's International Airport last week.

Officers were performing "routine outbound checks" on Jan. 15, according to a release from the agency, and spoke to one passenger en route to the Middle East who declared that he was travelling with $9,000.

However, when officers referred him for further examination, they found the man was actually carrying more than $18,000 in his jacket, plus another $20,000 packed in his checked luggage.

"The CBSA not only stops dangerous goods from entering Canada, but also prevents funds from leaving to potentially support illegal activities overseas," said Nina Patel, district director of the CBSA Prairie Region, in a release.

"The number of these seizures in Calgary is a direct result of our officers' diligence in protecting national security."

The release explained the man had a "low level" of income when compared to the large sum of cash he was carrying and he was unable to demonstrate to the officers he had legitimately acquired the money.

Cash seized by the CBSA at Calgary International Airport on Jan. 15. CONTRIBUTED

CBSA officers seized the cash as suspected under the Proceeds of Crime and Terrorist Financing Act and say the investigation is ongoing.

In December of 2014, CBSA made a similar seizure at the Calgary airport, when a passenger was carrying more than $84,000 believed to be proceeds of crime.

Any currency or other monetary vehicle equal to or over $10,000 must be reported to the CBSA.

MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Health. Group proposes levy on sugary drinks

The future of sugary drinks in Alberta isn't looking too sweet.

In light of falling provincial revenue, the Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention (APCCP) is calling for a levy on soft drinks.

"As Albertans, all we have to do is read the paper every day and we can see that (the government) is looking for sources of revenue," said Kate Chidester, vice-president of health and research at the Heart and Stroke Foundation in Alberta.

"This is an opportunity to help, both from a revenue-generation side for the government, and from a health perspective."

The coalition is calling for a tax of 50 cents per litre of consumption. They estimate the levy will generate $158 million annually, and that's assuming sales drop by 20 per cent after the price hike.

Rachel Prowse, a registered dietitian and PhD student at the University of Alberta, said focusing on disease prevention is an investment that will lower the cost of health care.

She said that the empty calories in sweetened beverages are linked to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension, which places an added burden on the health-care system.

Quoted

"We believe very strongly that reducing the consumption of these drinks would help us to live a longer life."

Kate Chidester, vice-president of health and research at the Heart and Stroke Foundation in Alberta

"We are paying billions of dollars in health-care costs," she said. "So any kind of intervention to alleviate this would benefit us all."

The APCCP recommends that a fraction of the money generated be used to "reinvest" in a wellness foundation to offer sustainable health promotion programs in Alberta.

"Right now in Alberta, 67 per cent of adults are overweight or obese," said Chidester. "We believe very strongly that reducing the consumption of these drinks would help us to live a longer life." JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

Most city administration now takes place in Calgary's municipal building, but city councillors' offices and the office of the mayor are still in old city hall, seen here. Coun. Druh Farrell says she's seen some "wild parties" take place inside during her 14 years on council, and it's time for the culture to change. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO FILE

Drinking, drug use alleged at City Hall

Civic ethics. Members let fly accusations of misconduct; Female councillor says sexual harassment a 'systemic issue'

ROBSON FLETCHER
robson.fletcher@metronews.ca

Calgary's mayor says he has received several complaints about members of council getting exceedingly drunk at community events, drinking during council meeting breaks, and even bringing illegal narcotics to city hall, but there's nothing existing ethics rules can do to stop it.

A veteran female city councillor, meanwhile, says she has witnessed multiple instances of male councillors behaving toward women at city hall in ways that "would be firing offences" in other workplaces.

Their comments came during a wild committee meeting Tuesday surrounding alcohol consumption and expensing policies that turned into a forum for levelling accusations and airing grievances.

Without naming names, committee members took turns outlining concerning behaviour of their colleagues — past and present — while speaking increasingly specifically about events that have not been fully made public.

"To be frank with you, I have received multiple complaints about members of council who have gotten blotto at community events," Mayor Naheed Nenshi said at one point.

"I've even received reports of illicit substances in the workplace and at this point there's no way to investigate them," the mayor later added. "There's nothing to do about them."

Coun. Druh Farrell, meanwhile, tied the discussion back to allegations revealed late last year surrounding a "systemic issue" of misconduct within the office of the city councillors. That led council to agree to "respectful workplace" training following a closed-door meeting.

Quoted

"Right now when somebody phones me and says councillor X was acting really inappropriately and was totally drunk at a community event, I can say you should take it up with councillor X ... because there's no policy saying they can't do that." Mayor Naheed Nenshi

"It speaks to a tone and that really concerns me," Farrell said Tuesday. "You have mostly men in a position of power and you have women in supporting roles and you add alcohol into that mix."

Farrell, one of two female members on Calgary's 15-person city council, was first elected in 2001 and said she has seen some "wild parties during working hours" in her time at city hall.

"When I've complained in the past, I've been punished — my wrist has been slapped," she said. "We need to join the 21st century."

Coun. Andre Chabot, a 10-year council veteran, said council has become "way more conservative" in the past decade over these types of issues.

"Previous councils were a lot more lax," Chabot said, admitting he last had a drink in his office in December. "You want to look back at the Ralph Klein days? In the Ralph Klein days they used have to wine for supper — in council."

Chabot also said the allegations raised Tuesday are "untrue" and described some of his colleagues' comments as "irresponsible."

"When council paints itself in a bad light, then the opinion of the general public becomes that council is running amok," Chabot said.

He and Coun. Ward Sutherland voted against recommended new policies that could forbid alcohol consumption in councillors' offices or during work hours.

Chabot said sometimes city hall guests want to have a drink with a councillor — an occurrence that's only come up three times in his 10 years on council — and city policy shouldn't "sterilize our offices of that opportunity."

"I think some people would look at it as disrespectful if they're having a drink and you're not willing to have one with them," Chabot said.

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Green Line info sessions underway

Eager citizens came out Tuesday to the first of three public houses on the southeast leg of the proposed Green Line — a new, dedicated bus rapid-transit route that is to eventually be converted into a CTrain line.

"We just wanted to get more information," said Kyla Baldrey at the info session, held at Fort Calgary. "There's a lot of rumours going around it was a full-blown LRT, but now we're learning that it's above ground and more pedestrian-friendly and neighbourhood-friendly."

She and her co-worker Tannis Jager work out of Ramsay and Inglewood and have clients in the area. They both can see benefits to the Green Line and though Baldrey said she typically drives, it's always a struggle getting into areas like Inglewood when you have to share the road with buses in the morning.

City staff said the sessions are meant to connect the community with the project, which has been in the planning stage for years.

"Today what we've heard so far is basically how will (the public's) input be used," said project manager Fabiola MacIntyre. "We're talking to them about refinements to the alignment, and we're talking about the future vision of development."

Calgarians can expect to see buses on the designated transitway after 2021 — a date for its conversion into an LRT line is still up in the air.

Two more sessions are scheduled for this week: Wednesday at the Cranston Community Centre and Thursday at the Glenmore Inn.

They all run from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.

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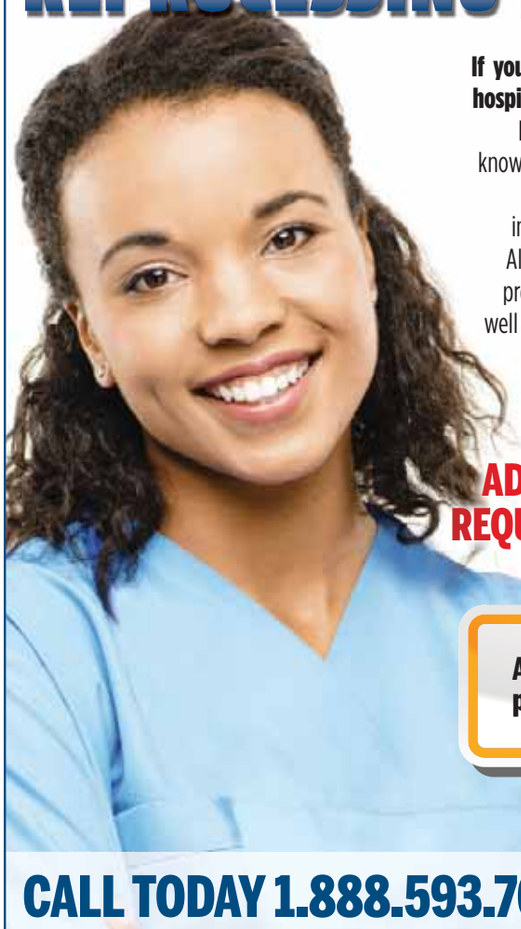

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The United in Light Ribbon Campaign has seen dozens of volunteers tie white ribbons to trees in St. Albert to honour the victims of the RCMP shootings on the weekend. LUCY HAINES/FOR METRO

A community works to heal

White ribbons.

St. Albert citizens cope with RCMP shootings through campaign and prayer services

LUCY HAINES
calgary@metronews.ca

St. Albert residents are finding ways to cope with and grieve the shootings of two RCMP members on the weekend.

About 150 citizens and local faith leaders gathered at a candlelight service at the Next Christian Community Church Tuesday evening to pray for the wounded police officers and their families, as well as for the larger community.

"People need to ventilate — it's raw and painful to talk about for residents here, but think of what the members that were on the same watch that night are going through," said Cyril Gowler, chaplain for the St. Albert RCMP detachment. "People grieve internally, but they mourn externally, as a community."

On Monday, St. Albert residents and friends Debbie Raymond and Tara McCormick started the United in Light Ribbon Campaign as a way to cope with feelings of helplessness, according to McCormick.

"We just wanted to come together to do something positive. There are so many touching messages on our Facebook page. People are offering to help tie ribbons or asking where to make a donation, so we'll keep going and spread the light," she said.

St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse said while the outpouring of support for the RCMP through flowers, ribbons and Facebook postings is evidence of how much citizens are touched by the shooting, he is encouraging residents to find their own way to show they care for the Wynn and Bond families.

"I think there are things we can do," said resident Henry Vogelaar, who came to the prayer service. "It's not a normal thing to happen here, and sometimes you need to be with others — to talk about it."

Residents respond

- In just 24 hours, the United in Light Ribbon Campaign, created by two longtime St. Albert residents, has seen dozens of citizens create and tie more than 600 white ribbons to city trees.
- The Ribbon Factory in Edmonton donated 7,800 metres of white ribbon toward the cause.
- A fundraiser to benefit the families of St. Albert RCMP officers Const. David Wynn and Auxiliary Const. Derek Bond will be held Feb. 7 at the Celtic Knot Pub in St. Albert.

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Girl who stopped chemotherapy treatment suffers stroke, dies

Alternative healing.
Family blames chemo for daughter's death; oncologist refutes claim

An 11-year-old aboriginal girl who made headlines with her choice to abandon chemotherapy in favour of alternative healing methods to treat her cancer has died.

Makayla Sault, a member of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, located near Brantford, Ont., suffered a stroke on Sunday and died early Monday, her family said.

In a statement issued in Two Row Times, a weekly indigenous newspaper, Sault's parents called her death "a tragic loss."

"Makayla was on her way to wellness, bravely fighting toward holistic well-being after the harsh side effects that 12 weeks of chemotherapy inflicted on her body," her family said.

"Chemotherapy did irreversible damage to her heart and major organs. This was the cause of the stroke."

An oncologist countered, however, saying a leukemia cell could go into the bone marrow and crowd out normal cells. This could result in a very low platelet count, which could result in a bleeding stroke in the head, explained Dr. Jacqueline Halton, a pediatric hematologist-oncologist at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

"If your white-cell count is so high, it can make the blood very sludgy," she said. "You can have a stroke from the blockage of the arteries in the brain."

Halton added that while certain forms of chemotherapy can possibly lead to a stroke, that would happen within days or weeks of receiving chemotherapy, not months after it was stopped.

Sault wrote a letter last year asking to be taken off chemotherapy, saying that the treatment was "killing" her body.

"I have asked my mom and dad to take me off the treatment," she wrote.

"I know that what I have can kill me but I don't want to die in a hospital on chemo, weak and sick."

The McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton, which had administered chemotherapy to Sault, offered its condolences to her family.

"Everyone who knew Makayla was touched by this remarkable girl. Her loss is heart-breaking," hospital president Peter Fitzgerald said in a statement. "Our deepest sympathy is extended to Makayla's family."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Surrounded by family, including her mother Sonya, Makayla Sault, 11, speaks at an event in Ohsweken, Ont., on May 18, 2014. Makayla had the full support of her family when she decided to stop her chemotherapy sessions to treat leukemia. THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mountie shootings

Justice Minister averse to review

Justice Minister Peter MacKay appears cool to a proposal by the head of the RCMP in light of the recent shootings of two Mounties in Alberta. In response to comments by RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson, who over the weekend said Shawn Rehn's criminal past may spark an examination of the justice system, Mackay said he believed a full analysis would not provide the needed answers.

Const. David Wynn has been in hospital since he was gunned down by Rehn Saturday. He is not expected to survive. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Audit

Dying with Dignity loses tax status

The federal government is stripping Dying with Dignity Canada of its charitable tax status following a political-activity audit by the Canada Revenue Agency.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo, right, prominent French physician Patrick Pelloux, second from right, and New York City mayor Bill de Blasio, third from right, are among those standing by after laying a wreath of flowers Tuesday at the site of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper attack in Paris. FRANCOIS MORI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

France seeks to lay charges in attacks

Terror. New measures to prevent future attacks include increased intelligence-gathering

French anti-terror prosecutors were seeking to charge four men Tuesday in connection with the attacks in Paris that left 20 people dead. The men would be the first suspects charged in the country's bloodiest terrorist attacks in decades.

The four men remained in court late Tuesday awaiting an anti-terror judge's decision on whether to open preliminary investigations against them.

The possible charges were expected just hours before the French government was to unveil new measures aimed at helping head off future attacks, giving police more power to tap phones, monitor websites and force Internet companies to block online hate messages.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls will present new security measures Wednesday that will include efforts to increase intelligence-gathering against jihadis and other radicals, block their activities on the Internet and prevent them from collaborating inside prisons or travelling abroad to fight, President François Hollande said.

The court case and the arrests came as Valls urged his nation to do some soul-searching about the country's deep ethnic divisions and declared that fighting hatred, anti-Semitism and racism a top priority.

The Paris prosecutor's office said the four men in court Tuesday were suspected of providing logistical support to Amedy Coulibaly, one of the terrorists killed by police, and requested they be detained longer.

Coulibaly shot a policewoman to death on the outskirts of Paris and then killed four hostages inside a kosher supermarket before being shot dead by police. It is not clear whether the four suspects, all in their 20s, were involved in plotting the attacks or were aware of Coulibaly's plans.

Five others arrested in the investigation were released without charge, prosecutors said. No one has been charged with direct involvement in the Paris terror attacks.

Coulibaly claimed allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group while the two brothers who attacked the Charlie Hebdo satirical weekly said they were backed by al-Qaida in Yemen.

In Bulgaria, a court on Tuesday agreed to extradite a Frenchman who knew one of the two Kouachi brothers who massacred 12 people at the newspaper. Fritz-Joly Joachin told the Bulgarian court he was innocent and wanted to return to Paris to clear his name.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

State of the Union

Obama focuses on tax policy, economic inequality in speech

U.S. President Barack Obama said Tuesday it was time for Americans to "turn the page" on years of economic troubles, terrorism and lengthy wars, using his sixth State of the Union speech to outline new tax policies that would hit the wealthiest Americans and give breaks to the middle class.

Obama spoke to a Congress controlled in both houses by opposition Republicans for the first time in his presidency.

But the policies the president called for suggested that he had no plans to curtail his own agenda in favour of Republican priorities.

Obama's speech proposed increased tax rates for wealthy Americans with much of the new revenue earmarked for measures to benefit low- and middle-income earners who have seen wages stagnate for years.

While he made a bold proposal, tax-averse Republicans are unlikely to act on the president's plan.

But Obama used one of his biggest platforms, a speech that was nationally televised to tens of millions of Americans on Tuesday evening, to highlight the issue of growing economic inequality, a critical marker for the next presidential campaign.

He also promoted his decision to normalize diplomatic relations with Cuba and asked for a new congressional approval and funding for the campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Retail. GoodLife Fitness eyeing Target locations

Is a Canadian exercise club a good fit for an old Target? GoodLife Fitness seems to think so.

In a statement sent out Tuesday, GoodLife Fitness said it is eyeing the soon-to-be-vacant Target stores across Canada as an option to expand.

The fitness chain's goal is to expand to 400 locations in 2015, with a goal to eventually reach 1,000 storefronts, the CEO said.

"The former Target locations provide spacious and convenient locations that would be an excellent space," said David Patchell-Evans, GoodLife Fitness CEO, in a statement. "In 1999, we acquired 12 of the former Eaton's stores, and at that time we were a much smaller company and solely based in Ontario, so we are definitely poised for this type of growth.

"We want our real estate and shopping-centre partners to be healthy and successful, too, so this would be a positive solution for all."

Patchell-Evans told Metro that GoodLife is looking at a number of options but would not go into specifics.

"(We're) in the beginning stages of expressing interest in many Target locations and evaluating what might be possible," he said. "To date, we have had high-level discussions with a number of landlords."

Patchell-Evans said former Target employees are encouraged to apply for jobs with GoodLife, noting that whenever possible Target employees would get first crack at interviews.

ELISHA DACEY/METRO IN WINNIPEG

This Target store in Toronto could be sporting a new logo as part of GoodLife Fitness' growth strategy. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Market Minute

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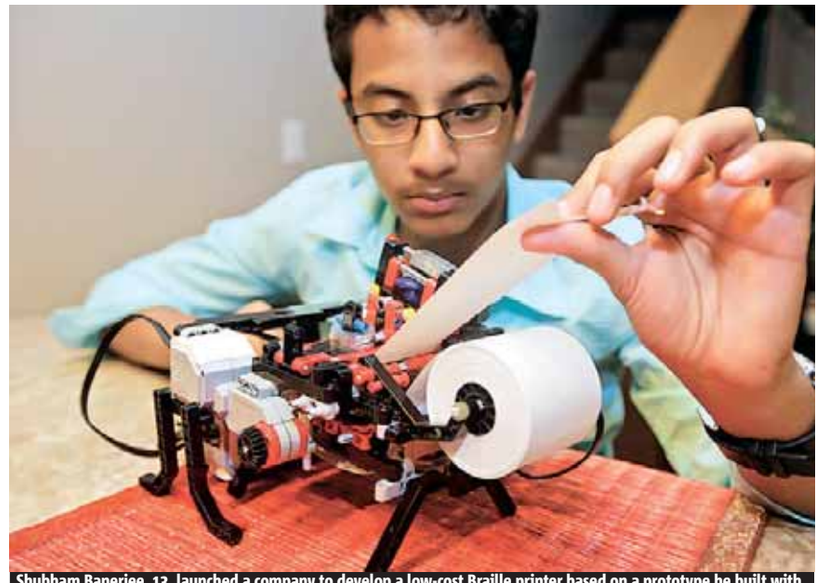
Teen builds Braille printer with Lego kit

California. Eighth-grader's dream of producing a low-cost machine for the blind gets backing from Intel



Shubham Banerjee, 13, launched a company to develop a low-cost Braille printer based on a prototype he built with his Lego robotics kit for a school science-fair project. MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In Silicon Valley, it's never too early to become an entrepreneur. Just ask 13-year-old Shubham Banerjee.

The California eighth-grader has launched a company to develop low-cost machines to print Braille, the tactile writing system for the visually impaired.

Shubham built a Braille printer with a Lego robotics kit as a school science-fair project last year after he asked his parents a simple question: how do blind people read? Shubham did some online research and was shocked to learn that Braille printers, also called embossers, cost at least $2,000 US — too expensive for most blind readers, especially in developing countries.

Shubham wants to develop a desktop Braille printer that costs around $350 US and weighs just a few pounds, compared with current models that can weigh more than 20 pounds.

After the Braigo — a name that combines Braille and Lego — won awards and enthusiastic support from the blind community, Banerjee started Braigo Labs last summer with an initial $35,000 US investment from his dad, Niloy Banerjee, an engineer who works for Intel.

Shubham used the money to build a more sophisticated version of his Lego-based printer using an off-the-shelf desktop printer and a newly released Intel computer chip. The new model, Braigo 2.0, can translate electronic text into Braille before printing.

Intel executives were so impressed with Shubham's printer that in November they invested an undisclosed sum in his startup. Intel officials believe he's the youngest entrepreneur to receive venture-capital money. Braigo Labs is using the money to hire professional engineers and advisers to help design and build Braille printers based on Shubham's ideas. The company aims to have a prototype ready for blind organizations to test this summer and have a Braigo printer on the market later this year.

Shubham is too young to be CEO of his own company, so his mother, Malini, has taken the job, though she admits she wasn't too supportive when he started the project.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Airlines

Alitalia plans new routes, hubs after Etihad takeover

Alitalia's new chairman Luca Cordero di Montezemolo aims to make the airline profitable in 2017 following its takeover by U.A.E.-based Etihad Airways. Alitalia's strategy envisions new routes from Rome to Dusseldorf, San Francisco, Beijing and Santiago, among other cities, and extra flights to New York, Chicago, Rio de Janeiro and Abu Dhabi, Etihad's hub.

The new strategy focuses on three Italian hubs: Milan's Malpensa and Linate airports and Rome's Leonardo da Vinci airport.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Banking

U.S. retailers lose court battle over debit-card fees

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected a challenge from retailers who claim the U.S. Federal Reserve allows banks to charge businesses too much for handling debit-card transactions.

The justices let stand a federal appeals-court ruling that upheld the Fed's cap of about 24 cents per transaction on so-called "swipe fees" that merchants pay to banks every time a customer uses a debit card to make a payment.

Before the cap was imposed, fees averaged 44 cents per swipe.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Notice of Hearing For Permanent Guardianship Order To
Samantha Illisa Smith

Take notice that on the **28th of January 2015 at 9:30 a.m., at Calgary Family Court, Courtroom #1205, 601 – 5th Street SW, Calgary, Alberta,** a hearing will take place.

A Director, under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act will make an application for: **Permanent Guardianship Order** of your child born on **February 19, 2014**. If you wish to speak to this matter in court, you MUST appear in court on this date. You do have the right to be represented by a lawyer. If you do not attend in person or by a lawyer, an Order may be made in your absence and the Judge may make a different Order than the one being applied for by the Director. You will be bound by any Order the Judge makes.

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VOICES

A COOL POPE IS STILL A POPE

With his off-script common-sense pronouncements based on love and kindness, the latest leader of the Catholic church has been handing some excellent smackdowns to the pious powers that be. But when he tells his flock they don't need to be like rabbits, but shouldn't use birth control, what's an agnostic supposed to do but poke fun?

PAUL SULLIVAN
readers@metronews.ca

Pope Francis's latest headline-grabbing remarks: "Some people think that — excuse my expression here — in order to be good Catholics we have to be like rabbits. No. Parenthood is about being responsible. This is clear." METRO PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

The latest advice from Pope Francis to the Catholic flock: don't be like rabbits. Presumably he's not referring to having big ears and a cute fluffy tail.

Before I go any further, I should make it clear that Pope Francis is the best pope ever, even better than Pope John XXIII and the unfortunate 33-day pope, John Paul I, who showed brief promise.

Francis, who named himself after the best saint ever, has tightened the Roman collar around more than one powerful Vatican neck with his off-script common-sense pronouncements based on love and kindness.

It was reported that the Pope told a little boy who just lost his dog that all dogs go to heaven. Turns out he didn't really say that, but he didn't rush to issue any denials, either. Just helped pick up the theologians who fainted when they heard the report.

But, hey, he's still the pope, and there's a line the pope can never cross: birth control.

Apparently using any technology other than restraint remains at the top of the list of Catholic no-nos — the technical term is sins — as the Pope re-affirmed on the way home from his visit to the Philippines.

Clearly, the shoes of the fishermen weren't quite touching the ground as Il Papa told reporters that people should practise "responsible parenting," as in, "Not tonight, dear, we already have 11 kids."

You'd think that responsible parenting would include tactical use of condoms, birth-control pills, etc., anything that would head off the rush of sperm swimming like the dickens to increase the world's population — oblivious as sperm are to the requirement to feed, clothe and house all those babies once they arrive.

Of course this new doctrine of "responsible parenting" is a real departure from the bad old days, when God told good Catholics to breed like rabbits … and eat fish sticks on Friday. In today's church, says Francis, there's no need to breed like a bunny. But he's a little vague on the appropriate animal role model going forward. Maybe salmon, which have sex every four years.

OK, so I'm not infallible.

Poor Francis is wrapped in a dogmatic dilemma: bringing birth control to the party puts a host of horny Catholics on the slippery slope. It means that the option exists to have sex for purposes other than procreation (as if, snort!).

But the church is apparently willing to go down fighting on this one, even if it means confounding the faithful and providing the faithless with another reason to engage in unholy jest.

Forget gyms; what we need are good old-fashioned indoor parks

SEAN MCKIBBON
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Target's departure is going to leave some very large commercial spaces empty, with various mega-corporations jostling to fill the space.

Included on that list is fitness giant Goodlife, which announced this week that it is interested in taking over the lease. As a mildly overweight 40-something dude with two kids, this got me thinking.

With some of these spaces hovering at around 100,000 square feet, the gym chain could certainly fill these spaces with fun things like pools and saunas — but what I'm really thinking is an indoor park.

In other words, a place where my kids could do what they like to do when they get into a Target or other open area in the winter time: run like the dickens.

I don't mean a fitness club. A park. With plants. A few teeter totters, maybe some hoops, some benches.

Fake grass, real grass, I don't know — but some place where I don't have to worry about the kids giving some poor security guard the unpleasant task of being the heavy and telling them to not run around.

Y'know, like a park park

Fake grass, real grass, I don't know — but some place where I don't have to worry about the kids giving some poor security guard the unpleasant task of being the heavy and telling them to not run around.

In the '50s, people thought about building Iqaluit under a giant dome, but that never took off. As a former resident of Nunavut's capital, I'm kind of glad. The outdoors are nice.

But sometimes, even in balmy southern Canada, it's really cold. And there's that nasty period in the spring when it's still really cold, but taking a canoe to the park seems like a better option than galoshes.

Ottawa, where I live, has some great, large inflatable-dome facilities that even let people go in for walking sessions, but nothing unorganized.

Kids and adults alike need a place to just be themselves.

Maybe there could be a play structure, but not one of those nutty giant hamster mazes. My kids love going to those places and doing laser tag or the trampoline park. Those places are all great but they aren't what I'm talking about.

When they're little, you have to kind of run after them. Mildly overweight, 40-something dudes do not belong in giant hamster mazes.

Maybe I should get a Goodlife membership.

But I still want that indoor park.

Sean McKibbon is the managing editor of Metro Ottawa. He adores his children, who are actually very well behaved but exceptionally fast runners.

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Gossip

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METRO'S TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Johnny Depp ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Johnny is not with the band

Attention actors who try to launch music careers: Stop it. You're making Johnny Depp sick. "That whole idea for me is a sickening thing, it's always just made me sick," Depp said while promoting Mortdecai in Berlin. "I hate the idea, 'Come see me play guitar because you've seen me in 12 movies.' It shouldn't be. You want the people who are listening to the music to only be interested in the music." Firm but fair.

So, according to Depp's strict, Draconian take on how music should be appreciated, which of his fellow movie stars are in violation?

Jared Leto certainly jumps to mind, as does Scarlett Johansson — hey, remember her album of Tom Waits covers? Yeah, no. Oh, and Russell Crowe has a band. And doesn't his Mortdecai co-star Gwyneth Paltrow like to sing, too? Man, they're all going to have some explaining to do when they see Depp at the next Millionaire Movie Stars Rotary Club meeting.

But at least some good comes from all of this, as Depp insists, "You won't be hearing The Johnny Depp Band. That won't ever exist."

How to totally not talk about dating Taylor Swift

Matt Healy, ostensibly the singer of the band The 1975, is becoming much better known as the guy who insists he's not dating Taylor Swift, despite photos of the pair together and his regular comments during interviews about meeting her. But God, guys, why do you keep bringing it up? He totally doesn't want to talk about it. Except he does: It's "all bloody fake. It's a farce," Healy insists during a recent radio interview.

Taylor Swift

"We met each other, we exchanged numbers in the same way that a lot of people in this world kind of do, and we spoke occasionally. She's the biggest pop star in the world and I'm in Australia. There's no relationship of anything happening. It's just funny how people really, really buy into that."

That's all fine and good, but why do you have to bag on Australia like that? What's wrong with Australia?

Moore was just hating on snipers in general, alright?

Michael Moore is peeved at the press for turning his casual discussion of snipers and why they're terrible into an attack on box office titan American Sniper. The nerve of some people, right?

Moore initially tweeted, "My uncle (was) killed by (a) sniper in WWII. We were taught snipers were cowards. Will shoot (you) in the back. Snipers aren't heroes," and that tweet just happened to go out as most of Hollywood was remarking at how much money Clint Eastwood's new movie was making.

But that does not mean the two are related, according to Moore.

"Deadline Hollywood and the Hollywood Reporter turned that into stories about how I don't like Clint Eastwood's new film, American Sniper. I didn't say a word about American Sniper in my tweets."

Yeah, guys. Come on. Can't a guy just casually talk about snipers completely apropos of nothing, free of any agenda? Yeesh.

Michael Moore

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On Fox drama Empire, Cookie rules the roost

New series. At the heart of show about a hip-hop dynasty is a glamorous, fiercely astute businesswoman

Cookie Lyon, right, played by Taraji P. Henson, visits her son Jamal (Jussie Smollett, centre) and his partner Mike in the premiere episode of Empire. CHUCK HODES/FOX

Taraji P. Henson is driving down an L.A. street, chatting on her cellphone, when a billboard catches her eye.

"Hi, me! Hiiii!" she says, smiling at her latest on-screen incarnation: glamorous ex-con Cookie in Empire (which airs Wednesdays on OMNI 2, OMNI AB, OMNI BC and on Fox).

Draped in fabulous furs and drenched in attitude, Henson's Cookie is the heart of the Fox drama, a fiercely devoted mother and astute businesswoman who's fearless when it comes to getting what she wants. Her sometimes-reluctant partner is Lucious Lyon (Terrence Howard), a music mogul deciding which of their three sons should run the family's entertainment empire.

Henson has seen her face on billboards before, with dozens of film credits (including 2008's The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, for which she earned a supporting actress Oscar nod) and popular TV series such as Person of Interest to her name. "Sometimes I forget, you know what I mean?" she says. "I just go on about my day, and look up and go, 'That's right, I do have a TV show coming out!'"

The 44-year-old actress pulled over to talk with The Associated Press about the new show and the empire that is Taraji P. Henson.

Who is Cookie?
She is a hero. I mean, she is the truth. She is strong. She's family first. She's a lot of things. She doesn't compromise at all — never herself, and never her truth. That's what I love about her ... She says things that I might not have the guts to say. I love the way she dresses. I love how much she cares about her sons.

How is it working with Terrence Howard again, your old pal from Hustle & Flow?
I just know that I really like working with Terrence. I trust him. And for me as an artist — acting, you really have to be uninhibited. You cannot have any hang-ups.

Or if you do, they can't breathe and live through these characters, because their hang-ups aren't your hang-ups. So for me in order to fully explore characters without throwing Taraji in the mix, I have to feel safe ... And with Terrence, I'm so safe with him, I can try anything... We're friends. We've known each other, so it really works for Cookie and Lucious. When they came to me with the project, I said it has to be Terrence. When I cracked open the script, I saw no one but Terrence.

What's most challenging to you as an actress right now?
Challenging is getting what I think I deserve to be paid. (It's) challenging to get the projects I want done or green-lit. I'm still having to prove I'm bankable. But I think it's getting better!

I'm not one to wallow in the muck and say how bad. I don't harp on how bad things are... My thing is to prove each and every time I'm on the screen — whether it's TV, whether it's film, whether it's the stage — Taraji is going to deliver. So when I do get that moment — 'cause it's coming, I work too hard — when I do get that moment, that perfect movie comes along and some studio is going to say, 'I believe in her.' Not me and a man. Not me and another guy, no. Taraji P. Henson is going to open this film. Then I know that I'm doing my job.

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Here are some dreamy hideouts if you're looking to hole up a world away with your partner

KATHY ULLYOTT
scene@metronews.ca

Copthorne Hotel & Resort is within cycling distance of Maori sacred sites like Waipoua Forest.

Whether you and your beloved are honeymooning for the first or the 15th time, these spectacular New Zealand romantic retreats are perfect for your stay on the island of "the long white cloud."

Hotel DeBrett, Auckland
hoteldebrett.com

With its thick bespoke, 100 per-cent-New-Zealand-wool carpeting, eclectic mix of Art Deco and mid-century furnishings and meticulous attention to comfort, the Hotel DeBrett is exactly what owner Michelle Deery designed it to be: a luxurious, stylish home base in the dramatic, cosmopolitan business capital of New Zealand. Right downtown on Auckland's High Street, the Hotel DeBrett features such luxuries as hand-screen-printed bed throws, spa bath and shower and salon-quality hair dryers. Its on-site restaurant, DeBrett's Kitchen, has won a wall full of awards, including Metro 2014 Restaurant of the Year.

Duke of Marlborough Hotel, Russell
theduke.co.nz

The Duke proudly boasts that it has been "refreshing rascals and reprobates since 1827," when the Bay of Islands town of Russell was a raucous whaling port notorious for its, um, nightlife. Now, the once-named "hell-hole of the Pacific" is a charming retreat, and Riki Kinnaird and three associates have transformed the old Duke into its jewel. In addition to 25 rooms, all with spectacularly romantic views of the Bay of Islands, The Duke's restaurant claims "the freshest seafood in New Zealand" and its menu is a sampler of kiwi delicacies: Waikare Inlet oysters, green-lipped mussels, forest mushrooms, Matakana blue cheese and wild Raukumara venison.

The Farm at Cape Kidnappers, Hawke's Bay
capekidnappers.com

You could be forgiven for wanting to spend your entire honeymoon vacation at this five-star luxury lodge hotel. A Relais & Chateau property on 6,000 secluded acres of working farm, it offers individual lodge accommodation with incredible views of storied Cape Kidnappers — one of Captain Cook's original New Zealand landings. In addition to an infinity pool, par-71 golf course, an award-winning restaurant and luxury spa, you can enjoy cycling and trout fishing. However, The Farm is also a sanctuary for the famed kiwi, and a relationship between the hotel and New Zealand Environmental Services allows you to hike out on a Kiwi Discovery Walk with a conservationist to find the country's secretive emblem. You can also visit the gannet colony on Black Reef, or pack a picnic to take on one of seven walking/cycling trails that wander through the gorges, woods and seashores of the property.

The Spire, Queenstown
thespirehotel.com

Owners (and sisters) Amelia and Lucy Gain purchased the elegant, 10-room Spire just over three years ago, and the hotel is a testament to their attention to pampering detail. Guests are greeted with welcoming bubbly, fruit and chocolate (for two, natch); sinuous Danish recliners invite relaxation before the fireplace; L'Occitane toiletries accent a spa-style bath or shower. While right downtown in bustling Queenstown, the rooms are soothing and quiet, with views overlooking the 82-year-old St. Peter's Anglican Church, from which the hotel draws its name.

Copthorne Hotel & Resort, Hokianga millenniumhotels.co.nz/copthornehokianga

According to legend, Kupe, the ancestor and founder of the Maori on New Zealand, landed here in Hokianga Harbour some 1,000 years ago, calling the protected inlet home. Right on the harbor, and just cycling-distance away from Maori sacred sites such as Waipoua Forest is the Copthorne Hotel and Resort, a 108-year-old boutique inn perfect for weddings, receptions and honeymoons. Owner Pip Lloydd says many couples choose to wed at the spectacular grounds overlooking the Tasman Sea.

Wai Ora Lakeside Spa Resort, Rotorua
waioraresort.co.nz

The mineral-rich hot springs of Rotorua have been drawing health-conscious tourists to New Zealand since the mid-1800s. The Wai Ora (the name means "healing waters") is not just an ideal base from which to explore this history-rich area, but to relax and indulge in international-award-winning spa facilities and treatments. The on-site Mokoia Restaurant offers Pacific Rim infusion cuisine, outstanding service and panoramic views of Lake Rotorua.

If you go...

It's a long flight to the Antipodes (13 hours from Vancouver; 18 from Toronto), so fly as comfortably as you can. There are good reasons why Air New Zealand wins bundles of awards worldwide every year from both airlines' and travellers' associations; not least among them, their hilarious safety videos. (Right now, you can enjoy "An Unexpected Briefing" featuring a cast of hobbits, dwarves, elves and Peter Jackson himself.) You might even win your trip for free: go to airnewzealand.com and enter before Jan. 31, 2015 for a chance to win two economy class tickets.

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Bucket list

Diving in Cozumel

Mainland Mexico is terrific, but the island of Cozumel just south of Cancun is off-the-dial beautiful and has regained its footing since hurricane Wilma crashed through in 2005. Quiet and unhurried, it is considered one of the best places in the world to scuba dive, with more than 30 incredible sites on the west coast and a smaller dive scene on the east. Dressel Divers, which operates from the Iberostar Cozumel dock, even takes short breaks back on land between tanks. The all-inclusive resorts are quiet and good value. Leave your resort for the day and try the beach clubs around the island, such as Beachclub Buccanos Bar & Grill and Money Bar Beach Club.

DOUG WALLACE/METRO

'Cross the country there's plenty of places to ski

Winter sport. No matter where you live in Canada, it's possible to strap in for a great cold weather workout

It's definitely not the most accessible cross-country ski destination for most Canadians, but Labrador West in Newfoundland offers one of the best areas for winter sports in Atlantic Canada, according to the Menihek Nordic Ski Club, host of the 40th annual Great Labrador Loppet.

The March 28 loppet, for skiers and snowshoers of all ages, features 10-, 28- and 50-kilometre events.

It kicks off in Fermont, Que., 570 kilometres north of Baie-Comeau, and finishes in Labrador City, N.L.

The trail passes through beautiful landscape and is groomed for classic and free techniques, with refreshment stations along the way, the club says.

Cross-country skiing is one of the most relaxing ways to enjoy winter. ISTOCK

Menihek defines a loppet as a type of "great gathering" for skiers, adding that "enormous amounts of food and drink are consumed during the event."

There's no shortage of great trails to hit to cross-country ski in Canada, and what better time to do it than now, in the depths of winter? THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hit the trails

Looking for some good cross-country alternatives this winter? According to a Cottage Life magazine article, these are the best regions for cross-country skiing in Canada:

- Whistler and Callaghan Country, B.C.
- Okanagan Valley, B.C.
- Banff and Lake Louise, Alta.
- Northern Saskatchewan
- Algonquin Park, Ont.
- Simcoe County, Ont.
- Gatineau, Que.
- Long Range Mountains, N.L.

For more information visit meniheknordicski.ca

Adventure

Explore the world underwater

ON THE MOVE
Loren Christie
life@metronews.ca

Scuba offers you a chance to get up close with marine life. ISTOCK

Over New Year's I took the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) open water diver course and crossed scuba diving off my bucket list. The course itself was at times nerve wracking (removing and replacing your mask under water when you wear contacts is no fun) but once the various emergency exercises were completed, the magic of exploring coral reefs and swimming alongside electric coloured fish was worth every moment of apprehension.

I chose a program that allowed me to do the classroom and in-pool sessions in Canada before the trip and then finish with the open water portion down south. The open water diver course is intense, requiring approximately 30 hours of studying and practical learning. When finished you receive a certification that allows you to dive up to a depth of 18 metres without supervision.

Although I am happy to have the full certification, I would recommend PADI's discover dive for first timers. It allows you to get a taste of the world beneath the waves without having to make the huge time investment; a couple of hours of basic skills teaching and you are able to experience a dive with a guide.

If you are considering adding some scuba into your next holiday, make sure your travel insurance will cover you. Many basic insurance policies will not cover you as it is often considered an extreme sport. Plan your scuba experience in the middle of your trip; it is dangerous to fly within 18 hours of your dive due to the risks of decompression illness. Ensure the company that is teaching and taking you scuba diving are themselves PADI certified.

My scuba experience was in Curacao. The water was teeming with fish and was so warm I didn't need a wetsuit. Apparently the neighbouring island of Bonaire is even better; surrounded by an official marine park, which offers protection to its sea life. Other scuba hot spots in the Caribbean include Cozumel, Mexico, which is home to sting rays, barracudas, nurse sharks, eels and crabs, and the Cayman Islands is renowned for a stretch of reefs and wrecks that expose divers to a colourful world of coral, algae, sponges and tunicates. Belize's reef is the Northern Hemisphere's largest, second only to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

Orlando: Not just Mickey Mouse

More than theme parks. Dining, shopping, and shows make this city worth a visit

VAWN HIMMELSBACH
For Metro

Orlando conjures up images of theme parks, but there is more to this city than roller-coasters and Mickey Mouse. Of course, visitors can expect a few new roller-coasters, too.

"Orlando really works for repeat visitors," said Mark Jaronski, vice-president of global communications with Visit Orlando. "If you're a historic city or a natural wonder, visitors don't want you to change. The beauty of Orlando is that (the city) will constantly change and people come back for that."

Canadians escaping the cold can get their "sun fix," but still experience something new, he said.

While theme parks are constantly reinventing themselves, they now offer a range of private, behind-the-scenes experiences for small groups, such as swimming with dolphins at SeaWorld or going on a backstage tour of the savannah at Disney's Animal Kingdom.

But theme parks aren't just for kids. "Believe it or not, when you look at our total visitor mix, there are more people who visit without children than with children," Jaronski said.

But these days, there is also a lot to experience outside of Orlando's theme parks.

"Dining wasn't one of those thoughts that came immediately to mind when you thought of Orlando," Jaronski said.

But the city is now seeing the rise of celebrity chefs and locally-sourced gourmet fare.

Scratch in Winter Park, for example, serves up modern American tapas with local, seasonal ingredients, while The Smiling Bison in the Milk District offers a craft beer menu and farm-focused dining.

And the Artegon Marketplace recently opened for business — Florida's largest indoor artisan marketplace with more than 160 studio spaces featuring one-of-a-kind boutiques and handcrafted items.

Even downtown Orlando is getting a facelift. The downtown core recently saw the opening of the state-of-the-art Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, the new home for Broadway productions and the Orlando Ballet.

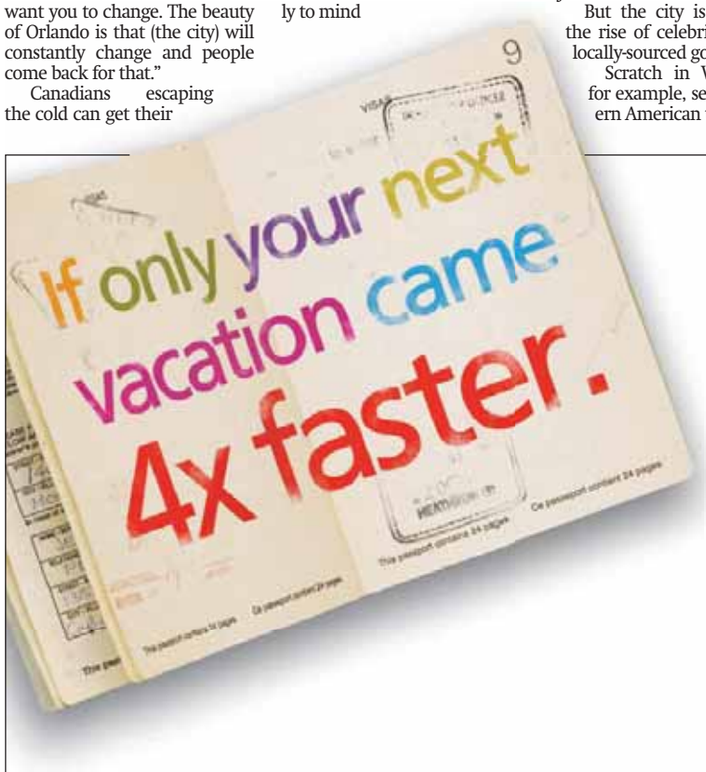
Jaronski also recommends Orlando's lesser-known neighbourhoods and districts, such as Winter Park, with its winding brick streets, boutiques, and outdoor cafés.

Upcoming in Orlando

- Skyplex is bringing the world's tallest roller-coaster to Orlando in 2016.
- Disney World is building an Avatar-inspired land set, slated to open in 2017, complete with floating mountains and bioluminescent rainforests.
- I-Drive 360 is an entertainment complex centred around a giant observation wheel, the Orlando Eye, opening this spring.

Take a ride on the Taumata Racer at Aquatica Orlando. CONTRIBUTED

The Everglades provide the perfect backdrop for a wild adventure into some wetlands. CONTRIBUTED



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Home Matters

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metro

Spaghetti moonlights as a savoury pie

Dinner. You lose the traditional pastry shell but still bake this dish and slice it up for a new take on pasta

DINNER EXPRESS
Emily Richards
food@metronews.ca

This spaghetti pie is a long time favourite for my family because it packs a punch when it comes to flavour and meal appeal.

Use your favourite spaghetti but be sure to cook it al dente, which translated means "to the tooth."

It should still be slightly firm with a bit of a bite to it, so that means you'll have to be sure to taste your pasta while its cooking to note the change in texture.

You might find that you like your pasta a little more al dente than you have been making it.

By cooking pasta correctly you will enjoy the dish and also ensure a perfect flavour and texture each time.

Instead of the traditional spaghetti and meat sauce piled high on a plate, this dish is served up like a pie!

Just bake the tasty mixture in a pie plate then serve it to your family in wedges with a crisp green salad for a new twist.

This recipe serves four. EMILY RICHARDS

FLASH FOOD

From your fridge to your table in about 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 8 oz (250 g) extra lean ground turkey
- 2 tsp (10 ml) canola oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 ml) Italian herb seasoning
- 2 cups (500 ml) chopped broccoli
- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) pasta sauce
- 2 tsp (10 ml) butter or soft non hydrogenated margarine
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) all purpose flour
- 1 cup (250 ml) skim milk
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) 1% cottage cheese
- 6 oz (175 g) cooked spaghetti (about 3 cups/750 ml)

Directions

1. In large saucepan cook turkey for about 5 minutes or until no longer pink. Drain in sieve to remove fat. Return saucepan to medium heat with oil and cook onion, garlic and Italian seasoning; stirring for about 2 minutes or until onion is softened. Return turkey to saucepan and add broccoli and tomato sauce; bring to a simmer, cover and cook for 5 minutes. Set aside.

2. In another saucepan, melt margarine over medium heat. Whisk in flour until smooth. Whisk in milk and cook, whisking for about 5 minutes or until starting to thicken and bubble. Whisk in cottage cheese and remove from heat.

3. Add al dente spaghetti to turkey mixture and stir in 1/2 cup (125 ml) of the cheese sauce. Pour into 10 inch (25 cm) deep dish pie plate; pressing down to flatten. Spread remaining cheese sauce over top and bake in 350 F (180 C) oven for about 20 minutes or until bubbly. Broil about 6 inches (15 cm) away from broiler for about 2 minutes or until golden on top, if desired. Let cool slightly before cutting into wedges to serve.

Tacos get the casserole treatment

While this dish comes together quickly, you can ensure that each of your weeknight dinners includes a well-balanced array of all food groups by taking a few minutes on the weekend to plan your week's dinners so you won't have to make last-minute decisions.

If you like spicy food, stir in or serve this Taco Supper Bake with hot pepper sauce.

1. Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C). In a large skillet, melt butter over medium-high heat; cook chicken with onion, red pepper, chili powder to taste, oregano and salt, using a fork to break up meat, for about 5 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Stir in beans, corn and salsa. Whisk milk with flour. Gradually stir milk mixture into chicken mixture. Bring to a boil, then stir frequently for 2 minutes.

2. Remove from heat; stir in 1 cup (250 ml) of the cheese. Transfer into an 8-inch (2 l) square dish.

3. Sprinkle chicken with tortilla chips then remaining cheese. Bake for 10 minutes or just until cheese is melted. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving. Scoop out into bowls. Serve with additional salsa, sour cream and guacamole. DAIRY FARMERS OF CANADA/ MILKCALENDAR.CA

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp (15 ml) butter
- 1 lb (450 g) ground chicken
- 1/2 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 red pepper, finely diced
- 1 to 2 tbsp (15 to 30 ml) chili powder
- 2 tsp (10 ml) dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp (2 ml) salt
- 19-oz (540 ml) can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup (250 ml) frozen corn
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) salsa
- 1 cup (250 ml) milk
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) all-purpose flour
- 2 cups (500 ml) grated Canadian Cheddar, divided
- 1 cup (250 ml) tortilla chips, barely crushed

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How to stand out in an interview situation

Career. Make yourself memorable using these one-on-one tips

VERONICA YAO
TalentEgg.ca

One of the toughest parts of the job hunt is making it through the written application stage. While a resumé is excellent for communicating your skills and accomplishments, it's not a great tool for conveying your personality.

As soon as you're called in for an interview, you go from being words on a page to a living, breathing human being.

Now the ball is in your court — and the last thing you want to do is be forgettable. So here are some tips on how to make your first impressions count with a potential employer.

Catching their eye with a little pop of colour is an easy but effective way of keeping you on their mind. ISTOCK

Wear something memorable

No, don't break out your powder-blue tuxedo. But wearing an appropriate, but memorable accessory can help you stand out among other applicants.

For instance, if you're wearing a suit, you could wear a bow tie, or a coloured pocket square.

If you decide to wear a dress or skirt, you could accessorize with some brightly coloured jewelry.

Many interviewees tend to play it safe by sticking with classic neutral colours — but even something small to make your outfit "pop" can help you do the same in an interviewer's mind. Furthermore, if your interviewer happens to like what you're wearing, it could spark an interesting conversation that they're not going to have with other candidates.

Take an interest in them as a person

Yes, interviewers are people too. And when they finish their day at five o'clock, they go back to their lives of being a parent, athlete, artist, volunteer — you name it.

People, for the most part, like talking about themselves. If you ask them about their day, and seem genuinely interested, they're usually happy to share.

So while there will be time for the spotlight to be on you, remember to take some time before and after to make smalltalk.

If you're not sure where to begin, see if they have a Linkedin profile.

Take a look at their interests and previous experiences. Chances are, you'll find something you can bring up casually and chat about. And if you do it well, you will very likely leave a positive impression on your interviewer.

Be passionate and genuine

There's nothing more invigorating than watching someone who is passionate about what they do. It's important to show why you love what you do, and the energy that you'll bring to the company.

This doesn't mean that you eat, sleep, and breathe maintenance work 24 hours a day, or you'll work overtime because you absolutely love working with spreadsheets. Instead, your passion should stem from the satisfaction you get as a result of the job — or even aspects of the job.

An applicant might not love stocking shelves in retail, but they might get an immense sense of satisfaction from coming up with organizational plans and executing them.

You might even link your work ethic to a hobby in your life. If you are a fan of sports, talk about how that passion links to different facets in your life, including work. Or if you're a musician, talk about skills you've gained through teamwork and collaboration.

Take notes

Taking notes tells your interviewer that you're listening.

- But more importantly, it says that you are invested in the information they're giving you, and you're open to learning new things. Even if a candidate has all the experience needed for the job, if they're not willing to learn, they're of little use to the employer.
- Bring along a notebook or a tablet to take your notes. If it has a colourful or eye-catching cover — bonus. Again, like a memorable accessory, this is another way you can start a conversation with your employer.
- One last point – don't be afraid to ask them to repeat something. Your note-taking skills are not being judged, but your attitude is.

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Advice

A business fib that's about to bite back

OFFICE SPACE
Eleni Deacon
life@metronews.ca

Did you exaggerate your excellence a little bit? See if you can find a way to master the basics of the skill set you bragged about. ISTOCK

Dear Metro,
So I lied on my resumé about having software skills I don't really have. It was quick decision that I didn't think would backfire, but now I'm in trouble. My boss wants me to lead a project that relies heavily on a computer program I can't actually use. How do I get out of this without seeming like a phony?
— Adobe Dummy

Dear AD,
A little light embellishment can pep up a ho-hum CV. But when your resumé is more padded than a mattress wearing a life jacket, you risk drowning in your own dishonesty.

If the software in question is widely used, consider taking an online course. One weekend of practice could get your skills to a passable — read: pretend-able — level. More niche programs will be trickier to learn. Call up old colleagues and ask for a crash course, or scour your office supply closet for a manual you can dust off and study.

No way to wing it? Weigh fessing up vs. flunking your task. Do bad work, and your boss will be irked. But confessing could cost you your job. If possible, downplay your knowledge: emphasize that you're more novice than expert, explaining that your skills might be rusty.

And next time you update your resumé, enhance the abstracts — not the hard facts.

Dear Metro,
I really don't click with one of my co-workers. There's no particular reason for the tension — we just don't get along. For the most part, we ignore each other. But I'm starting to worry that my obvious irritation is making me seem like a bad team player. How can I stay professional when I can't stand one of my colleagues?
— Lose My Feud

Dear LMF,
It's understandable — and even inevitable — that one of your workmates will make you berserk. Less acceptable: dealing with it like a jerk. Unless you're employed as a TV mean girl, the silent treatment is not a socially acceptable conflict management technique. Think of this relationship as an investment in your career. Your co-worker may drive you up the wall, but your attitude could be driving down your value as an employee.

Playing nice — or at least faking nice — will show your colleague, as well as the rest of your office, that you prioritize good vibes.

And who knows: a bit of phony small talk may spawn a genuine rapport. You have nothing to gain from maintaining this grudge except your own sense of stubborn superiority. To succeed in the real-world workforce, ditch the teen-movie theatrics.

ELENI DEACON IS A TORONTO-BASED WRITER WHO HAS SEEN IT ALL AS AN EAGER EMPLOYEE OF BIG OFFICES, SMALL OFFICES, HOME OFFICES AND ONE ITALIAN RESTAURANT.

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SPORTS 4

Flames should trade Ramo and Glencross

THE HOCKEY NEWS
Brian Costello
calgary@metronews.ca

Curtis Glencross has made it known he's looking for a big-money, big-term deal, but general manager Brad Treliving may be reluctant to accept anything more than three years for the 32-year-old. RICH LAM/GETTY IMAGES

Buyer or seller? What are the Flames going to be, leading up to the March 2 NHL trade deadline?

If the Flames are still in what will be an exciting playoff race, chances are they'll be both. And in a strategic fashion.

The best recent example of a competitive team being both a crafty seller and a thrifty buyer came during the 2013 season. Ryane Clowe and Douglas Murray were important pieces for the San Jose Sharks, but because they were pending UFAs, general manager Doug Wilson knew the likelihood was small he could afford them. So Wilson traded two proven playoff performers.

For Clowe, San Jose got a second-, a third- and a fifth-round draft pick from the Rangers. For Murray, the Sharks did well, getting two second-round picks. To replace them, Wilson picked up Scott Hannan from Nashville for a sixth-round pick, and Raffi Torres from Phoenix for a third-round pick. Not a big dropoff in team makeup and San Jose came out of it with three second-round picks.

Calgary's high-profile pending UFAs now are Curtis Glencross and Karri Ramo. The Flames have the cap room to retain both if they choose, but maybe the best course of action is to peddle them. Glencross has let it be known he's looking for a big money and big term, but maybe GM Brad Treliving is reluctant to hand out anything more than a three-year deal to the 32-year-old.

It helps that Glencross will be in demand in the coming weeks as teams look to beef up on hybrid physical, scoring wingers. I'd be shocked if Calgary couldn't get at least a second- and a third-round draft pick for him.

Joni Ortio's emergence has created a trade opportunity in the goalie department. There are a number of contending teams with sketchy backup goaltending who would offer a draft pick for Ramo. Or maybe the Flames intend to re-sign Ramo because dealing Jonas Hiller can get a better return.

Who knows, maybe this comes full circle back to San Jose and Wilson. His goalie Antti Niemi is a pending UFA and has struggled in the playoffs. What would the Sharks offer for Hiller?

Analytic stats study (after 46 games):

Calgary's Joe Colborne is No. 1 in Fenwick PDO among 607 NHLers who have played at least 200 minutes. Here are the top Flames.

1. Joe Colborne, 105.3.

23. T.J. Brodie, 103.1

37. Kris Russell, 102.8

39. Jiri Hudler, 102.7

CFL

Stamps sign Jamar Wall

The Calgary Stampeders have signed all-star defensive back Jamar Wall to a contract extension.

The 27-year-old halfback from Lubbock, Tex., had a share of the CFL lead with six interceptions last season. He returned one pick for a touchdown Oct. 24 against the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Wall also recorded five pass knockdowns while starting all 18 regular season games.

He had four tackles in Calgary's Grey Cup victory and another four in the West Division final.

The Texas Tech product was named to the CFL's all-star team in his third season in Calgary.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

CFL

Hall takes on Blue Bombers defence

Facing a diminished role with the Saskatchewan Roughriders, Richie Hall has taken on the challenge of becoming the Winnipeg Blue Bombers defensive co-ordinator.

Hall served as Saskatchewan's defensive co-ordinator the last four seasons. Saskatchewan's defence allowed the fewest touchdowns in the CFL while recording the most interceptions to anchor the Riders' Grey Cup in 2013.

But after Saskatchewan posted a 10-8 record last season, head coach Corey Chamblin said in December that Hall wouldn't continue as the Riders' defensive co-ordinator. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Pats flattening the competition

NFL. New England's high-octane offence looks to topple Seattle's top-ranked defence in the Super Bowl

The Patriots' Nate Solder was an unlikely candidate to score a touchdown during the AFC title game against the Colts on Sunday. MATT SLOCUM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Once Tom Brady gets their offence rolling, the New England Patriots are tough to stop.

Some of the NFL's top teams — Denver, Detroit, Cincinnati and Indianapolis — all lost to the AFC champions by at least 22 points.

Now the Patriots are in the Super Bowl against the defending champion Seattle Seahawks, whose four losses were by a total of 22 points.

"This is an incredible defensive unit," Patriots offensive co-ordinator Josh McDaniels said. "They can take the ball away from you. They can get to the quarterback. They can stop the run. It will be an incredible challenge."

The Seahawks, with the NFL's best defence, could stage their second straight Super Bowl blowout, having beaten the Broncos 43-8 last year.

Pretty close to the Patriots' 45-7 pasting of the Colts in last Sunday's AFC title game.

"It feels great to impose your will on a team," wide receiver Brandon LaFell said in a clubhouse filled with smiles, "and that's what we did all night."

The route to the Super Bowl on Feb. 1 takes the Patriots to Glendale, Ariz., where they'll try for their fourth NFL title and first in 10 years.

"The coaches prepare us for whatever we need to get the win," said fullback James Develin.

Even if it involves him catching a one-yard touchdown pass, his 11th reception in 37 NFL games, as he did Sunday.

Or offensive tackle Nate Solder being eligible in that game to catch a 16-yard scoring pass, the first reception in his four seasons.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL

Subban scores in OT for Canadiens

P.K. Subban scored on a power play 4:09 into overtime to lift the Montreal Canadiens to a 2-1 victory over the Nashville Predators on Tuesday night in the last game for both teams before the all-star break.

Alex Galchenyuk also scored for Montreal (29-13-3), while Mike Ribeiro tallied for Nashville.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Life event

Johnson, Gretzky welcome baby boy

Dustin Johnson and Paulina Gretzky are parents of a boy.

Johnson, an eight-time PGA Tour winner, said in a statement through his management company that their son was born Monday morning. Johnson is engaged to Gretzky, the daughter of hockey great Wayne Gretzky.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Westbrook leads Thunder in climbing over .500 plateau

Thunder guard Russell Westbrook reacts after scoring a basket during the team's 94-86 win over the Heat in Miami on Tuesday. Westbrook recorded a double-double with 19 points and 10 rebounds as Oklahoma City moved over the .500 mark for the first time this season.

J PAT CARTER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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2015 Volkswagen GTI

- **Type.** Three- or five-door sport hatchback
- **Engine.** 2.0-litre turbocharged I4 (210 hp)
- **Transmissions.** Six-speed manual, six-speed DSG automatic
- **Price.** $29,390 base, $34,985 as tested

Market position

• A performance model of the VW Golf lineup, just below ultimate Golf sportster, the Golf R.
• Pioneer of the Hot Hatch movement, which proves that a small, practical, and relatively inexpensive car can still offer excellent performance.
• Three trim variants: base 3-door, 3-door Autobahn, 5-door Autobahn.

Points

• 2015 is the first year for the 7th-generation Golf and GTI.
• Longer, lower and wider than the previous GTI. Also more aerodynamic, lighter, and more fuel-efficient.
• Engine is the latest version of VW's 2.0-litre direct-injection turbo, with 201 hp and 258 lb.-ft. of torque.
• Still using GTI's trademark and quirky tartan cloth seat material.

The GTI comes with two or four doors, along with the hatchback.

Notable features

• 18-inch wheels, red brake calipers, flat-bottom sport steering wheel.
• 5.8-inch touch-screen that you don't need to touch (uses proximity sensors).
• Available premium audio system with eight speakers and a subwoofer, designed by Fender.
• Forward-collision warning system. Electronic stability control with sport mode.

Hot hatch still brings the heat

PHOTOS: MIKE GOETZ

Review. Next-gen Golf makes a wonderful base for the new GTI. Bigger, lower, faster and more of everything you want

MIKE GOETZ
drive@metronews.ca

Volkswagen's GTI might not have been the first hot hatch when it debuted way back in late 1970s. But it was the first to sell in big numbers, which helped popularize the concept of a fun, performance vehicle that was also practical and economical.

The 2015 GTI is the seventh generation of this hot hatch from Germany. It is still wearing plaid or tartan seat material, just like the original, and is still a wonderful idea — but now even more wonderfully executed.

For one thing, I think it's the best-looking GTI yet, with clean bodylines, and LED-infused headlamp cluster, and 18-inch alloy wheels, which look massive on such a compact vehicle.

As scripted by those big wheels and the aggressive, low-profile tires, the GTI bites into corners and accelerates out of them with precision and competence. And the new variable, electric steering system delivers just the right feel and quickness through a chunky steering wheel, which now features a flat bottom like a race car.

I feared those low-profile tires were going to deliver a punishing ride, but the car is comfortable around town and nice and stable, not twitchy, on the highway.

Although I haven't driven this new GTI on a track, those who have suggest it might be a bit soft for at-the-limit driving. But who cares, when it is so perfectly optimized for spirited street driving?

GTI keeps its traditional plaid or tartan seats, but adds a flat-bottom racing wheel.

The car also finally gets a selectable sport mode for its stability control system, so you can have fun further down the traction scale before the safety systems kick in to save your hide.

The new 2.0-litre turbo engine is also a high point, delivering 210 horses and 248 lb.-ft. of torque in a really linear — and fun — manner. There is no turbo lag to speak of, and it revs easily and in a refined manner right to the top. Sounds good, too.

My tester had the six-speed manual transmission, and it shifted as smoothly as any I've tried in a while. A six-speed automatic is optional.

The new Golf platform is bigger and wider, so the GTI predictably offers more room and general comfort. The eight-way power sport seats are massive and supportive.

So what's not to like?

Well, prices are climbing on this sports car for the masses. The new GTI starts at $27,995, and our top-shelf Autobahn trim, with the optional Technology Package, was sitting pretty at $33,590.

But if you're a fan of hot hatches, you will undoubtedly be drawn to the heat of the new GTI.

Compare

1 Ford Focus ST
Base price: $30,664
Hot-hatch version of the Focus offers 252 horses and is very racy.

2 Subaru WRX
Base price: $31,645
Sporty Sube offers 268 horses but no hatchback option.

3 Mini Cooper
Base price: $27,862
Retro-cute two-door model packs in 189 horses.

DRIVE

Connecting cars could solve traffic woes

Driving Force. Cars that can communicate with each other and roadway infrastructure could help ease traffic congestion

JIL MCINTOSH
drive@metronews.ca

What's going to be the future of mobility? Most people talk about self-driving cars and more public transit, but many experts believe increased connectivity between personal cars will be the driving force behind improving traffic flow.

"The amount of global infrastructure spent on transport, especially public transit, is very high," says Sarwant Singh, a senior partner with consulting and analyst firm Frost & Sullivan.

"The car will become more and more important as part of an integrated mobility solution."

Many cars are already connected, offering smartphone integration or even WiFi hotspots, but Singh believes they will eventually operate through cloud computing to harness the power of Big Data — an interconnected web of information from numerous sources.

In future, for example, you might be able to plan your entire trip through your smartphone, with all of the connections (including trains or airplanes) mapped out to the minute and on one ticket.

Your car's parking spot would even be reserved and paid. Wireless sensors in the parking garage would locate an empty spot and send the information to your car's navigation system, which would guide you directly to it once you arrive.

This connectivity will also link with car-sharing services, integrating them as part of public transit.

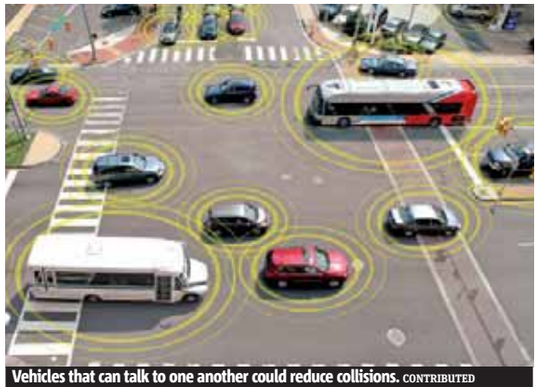
"The initial car-sharing model was A to B," Singh says. "Now we're seeing floating ones, where you can take or drop them anywhere. One of the expenses is parking and maintenance, so rather than put them in a specific place, we will see host parking, where they will be in people's driveways.

"There are also new car-sharing models, such as one in the U.S. where you take your own car to the airport, and someone else drives it while you're away."

By communicating with connected infrastructure, cars could gain access to low-emission zones or high-occupancy lanes put in place to optimize traffic flow, or even talk to other vehicles to know where they are and avoid crashes.

Although self-driving cars are under development, they're not expected for at least a decade or more, as they are dependent on traffic infrastructure and will need new legislation to allow their use.

Singh also speculates that drivers could use Internet aggregators to help them shop for cars, including the projected costs of fuel, maintenance and insurance. The app could even direct the buyer to a dealer who has a specific used car that would be a better choice than a new one.



Vehicles that can talk to one another could reduce collisions. CONTRIBUTED

Connecting the dots

- It is estimated that 80 to 120 billion connected devices will be in use by 2020.
- Car-sharing grew by 50 per cent in 2013, and there are expected to be 26.2 million members worldwide within five years.
- Connected cars will be able to wirelessly download software updates, monitor recalls, and upload diagnostic information to the dealer.

Design. Autonomous car a living room on wheels

Mercedes believes that when autonomous vehicles become the norm, cars will become a living room on wheels.

"We are convinced that autonomous driving will be a central factor on the way to comfortable, accident-free driving," says Prof. Herbert Kohler, head of research for Mercedes' parent company, Daimler AG.

"At the same time, it opens up new ways in which people can make the best use of their time on the road."

Key to the concept is variable seating. Four lounge chairs can also turn and pivot so occupants can sit and face one another, as if sitting around a dining table.

This freedom of movement, as well as feeling more homey, will give travellers the freedom and space to work or relax.

AFP

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Shift: From hybrids, technology, new vehicles and the environment, to saving money at the pumps

Most cars may soon travel 100 km on less than one litre of fuel

Family cars of the next decade will be the most economical and cleanest-burning mainstream cars ever built, thanks to cutting-edge technologies already being developed and proven, says Autocar magazine. It outlined the top new technologies that will propel the average family car while cutting emissions and returning fuel-efficiency levels better than 0.8 L/100 km. They include advanced flywheels, electric turbochargers, intelligent aerodynamics, variable-ratio compression engines and enclosed wheel wells that return big reductions in aerodynamic drag. These advances come with a cost, warns editor-in-chief Chas Hallett. "Car makers will have to be careful (as) the advance of green technology could prove devastating for companies already surviving on a slim profit margin."

ALL STORIES AND PHOTOS FROM WHEELBASEMEDIA.COM

Cars like the VW Golf improve fuel efficiency through technological advances in the engine and aerodynamics.

Honda passes motorcycle milestone

Honda, the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles, recently produced its 300-millionth bike. The 2015 Goldwing touring model is a machine so sophisticated and advanced that it's doubtful the company's founder, Soichiro Honda, could ever have imagined it when he founded the company in 1946. His first motorcycle, the single-cylinder Model D, or Dream, helped mobilize post-war Japan and establish a reputation for fuel-efficient transportation. Honda is best known today as a builder of cars, notes AutoWeek, "but the company simply wouldn't be where it is now if not for its truly groundbreaking two-wheeled offerings ... its motorcycles and scooters give tens of millions of individuals in developing nations the option of mobility every year."

The first Honda motorcycle was the Model D, or Dream, launched in 1946. Honda has since built more than 300 million motorbikes.

Shift points

- In announcing that its FCV hydrogen-fuel-cell vehicle will launch in Japan by March 2016, and then in the United States and Europe, Honda also joined the public-private partnership H2USA, whose goal is to cost-effectively deliver hydrogen across the United States.

Honda's FCV.

- Car2Go, the car-sharing company owned by Daimler Benz, recently passed the 1-million-member mark. Driving a fleet of 12,000 Smart cars in 60 cities and eight countries, Car2Go members have driven more than 218 million kilometres and taken more than 32 million trips, the company said in a press release.

If you commute less than 50 km, the Audi A3 e-tron will seldom need its range-extending engine, which allows a total distance of 930 km.

Audi's first-ever plug-in hybrid 'perfect' for most commuters, CEO says

Since most people commute less than 50 kilometres a day, Audi CEO Rupert Stadler says the new A3 e-tron Sportback will be "the perfect vehicle for everyday driving."

Of course, that just happens to be the electric-only range of Audi's first-ever plug-in hybrid.

If more than 50 km of travel is required, the e-tron's gas-powered engine adds another 880 km of range, for a combined total of 930 between recharging or gasoline fill-ups.

Although the plug-in hybrid system adds about 335 kilograms to the weight of the regular A3, Stadler noted it is still Audi's most frugal model, reportedly using just 1.5 litres of gasoline per 100 kilometres of driving in combined gas-electric mode.

Hydrogen generator might be a new hybrid

A fuel-cell powertrain is the conventional view of how to motivate a car using hydrogen, but the Green Planet Group of Scottsdale, Ariz., says a subsidiary company it owns has found another way, using an on-board hydrogen generator. The developers, AAQIS (Automotive

Air Quality Improvement Systems), also of Scottsdale, claim that when applied to a current gasoline- or diesel-fueled internal combustion engine, its on-board hydrogen generators help reduce emissions by up to 77 per cent and improve fuel efficiency by at least 11 per cent.

The system uses excess electricity generated by the engine to break down water into its base elements (hydrogen and oxygen), then feeds the gas back to the engine.

That will surely spark some debate.

FedEx fleet tests diesel, hydrogen range extenders

Courier and car-rental companies have long been the leaders in testing the commercial benefits of alternatively powered and fuelled vehicles. Running huge global fleets, they constantly seek ways to cut emissions and fuel costs while improving efficiency and delivery speeds. Case in point is FedEx, which, among other initiatives, is testing a fleet of 20 delivery trucks with hydrogen-fuel-cell range extenders in the United States, with a similar project being undertaken in France. It's also testing electric delivery trucks that use a diesel turbine generator as an electric range extender. The diesel turbine takes the place of the more common gasoline engine found in other extended range plug-ins, such as the Chevrolet Volt.

Shipping companies stand to gain a lot from cutting fuel costs, while the rest of us stand to gain from reduced emissions from their fleets. FedEx is experimenting with everything from electrics to hydrogen fuel-cells.

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Unveiled last week at the Detroit auto show, the Cascada is Buick's first convertible model in 25 years. CONTRIBUTED

Detroit show. Get set to drop your top as convertibles enjoy a resurgence

North Americans are ready to let their tops down and feel the wind blow through their hair.

That's the feeling among automakers as they roll out new convertible models at a time when many consumers are gaining confidence in the economy and have more money to spend on less-practical big-ticket items thanks to juicy stock market returns.

At this month's auto show in Detroit, Buick, Alfa Romeo and BMW all revealed glitzy open-air models to capitalize on that newfound confidence, and industry analysts expect more to come.

IHS Automotive, an industry consulting firm, predicts there will be 60 convertible models in the U.S. by 2020, 15 more than last year and the most since at least 2000.

"New models drive sales up," said senior analyst Stephanie Brinley, whose firm expects convertible sales to rise 63 per cent over the next five years, from 152,400 last year to 248,000 in 2020.

Following the recession, sales of convertibles tailed off and few new models were added. As vehicle development budgets were cut during the recession, convertibles were early casualties, says Brinley.

But now, with unemployment down and the stock market and luxury car sales up, automakers are looking for niches such as convertibles to increase sales in a competitive market. IHS estimates convertible sales grew nearly 9 per cent last year.

"The fear of conspicuous consumption is dead," says Michelle Krebs, senior analyst with autotrader.com. "Everybody's getting back into performance and the sexy, flashy mode. Convertibles play into that."

At the Detroit show, General Motors unveiled the Cascada, a Buick version of a stylish Opel convertible from Europe.

Fiat Chrysler is showing off its Alfa Romeo 4C Spider hardtop, which can be converted to open air.

BMW has a refreshed M6 high-performance convertible.

The four-seat Buick is the brand's first convertible in 25 years. It has an insulated soft top that can be opened in 17 seconds with the car travelling at up to 50 km/h.

It also has a turbocharged 200-horsepower engine and a safety system that deploys rollover protection bars behind the rear seats if the car detects a crash is possible.

The Cascada is just what Buick needs to keep its sales momentum going, especially in the prime convertible market of Florida, says Ed Williamson, who runs a Buick-GMC-Cadillac dealership in Miami.

Currently, Williamson says he has no convertible cars to sell against the ubiquitous German and Japanese models. "We see an awful lot of Lexus convertibles in this market," he says.

The convertible also helps Buick continue to change its once-stodgy image with a sportier, younger vehicle, said spokesman Nick Richards. The average age of a Buick buyer has fallen from 62 to 59 in the past six years.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Soft-top choices

- Six years ago, there were 48 convertible models available to North American car shoppers. Last year, there were 45, but several new models are coming soon.
- Current convertible choices range in price from $20,000 for a Fiat 500C to $850,000 for a Porsche 918 Spyder.

Fiat Chrysler is bringing the Alfa Romeo 4C Spider to North America, one of several new convertibles arriving this year. CONTRIBUTED

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2015 FUSION S
2014 IIHS TOP SAFETY PICK+ APPLIES TO OPTIONAL FRONT CRASH PREVENTION MODELS
TITANIUM MODEL SHOWN $33,999*

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AUGMENTED REALITY

Stuck on 12 Across? Scan this image with your Metro News app for today's crossword and Sudoku answers. It's OK. No one's watching.

→ See the full instructions on Metro's Voices page.

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Don't be tempted to try something you're not familiar with. With Mercury beginning a retrograde phase mistakes are more likely than not.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You may find it hard getting through to a loved one today but it's no big deal so don't worry about it. Chances are they don't want to hear what you have to say. Don't press it.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
If your sixth sense tells you that someone is not being honest with you then, yes, you should be on your guard. But don't make accusations unless you can back them up with facts.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Something you had high hopes for seems to have come to nothing and you are disappointed. Don't dwell on it because there are other interesting things you could be doing.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
The planets urge you to keep a low profile today because if you call attention to yourself in your usual Leo way someone may decide to make a target of you.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If you make a move without your partner's permission you may never hear the last of it. Whatever you want to do today be clear with your partner.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
A friend may want you to join them at a social event today but don't force yourself if you don't feel up to it. Cosmic activity in the wellbeing area of your chart means you need rest.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
It may be hard to stay calm if someone in a position of power gives you a hard time but chances are they are winding you up to see how you react.

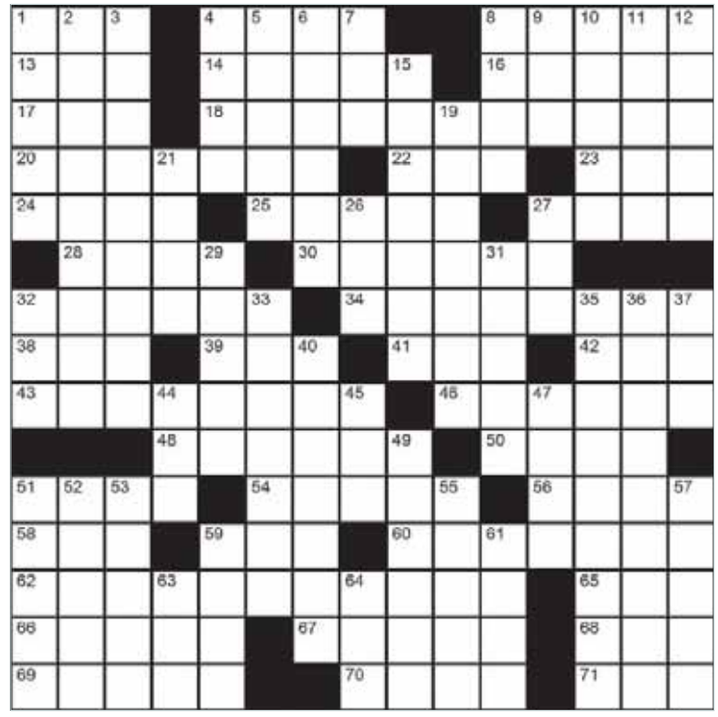
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Someone may say you have no right to occupy a certain position but as far as you're concerned possession is nine-tenths of the law and you intend to stay where you are.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
As mind planet Mercury begins a retrograde phase, the more others try to convince you that something is clearly right the more likely it is to be wrong.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Sometimes it's OK to be suspicious and this is one of those occasions. If your sixth sense tells you to take care then be smart and listen to it.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Do you listen to someone who claims to know what is going on or do you listen to that voice inside your head that says they are talking trash? You know the answer to that one already.

Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



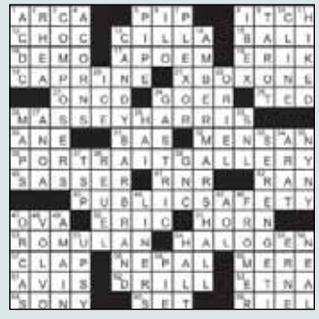
Across

1. Current 007 portrayer ...his initials-sharers
4. Clever ones
8. Ceremony spot
13. McDonald's founder's monogram
14. Major artery
16. __ Bridge ...It connects Canada (Fort Erie, Ontario) to the USA (Buffalo, New York)
17. "__ questions?"
18. Merchant sort
20. Heart-related
22. Tic-Tac-Toe loser
23. __ Islands, Indonesia
24. Aroma, variantly
25. Cupboard part
27. Formal org.
28. Long-range weapon, commonly
30. Largest private sector union in Canada
32. Lise Watier fare
34. Street-side stand
38. Singleton
39. Debit opps.
41. Mr. Pendleton of "Northwest Passage"
42. Mon. in Montreal
43. Dave __ Band
46. "You __ worry." (There, there...)
48. Friendly
50. Rhett's expletive
51. Advocate
54. Victorious: 2 wds.
56. Pronounces
58. 'Bad'-meaning prefix
59. Fad game disc
60. French actress Ms. Paradis
62. "Smalltown Boy" band: 2 wds.
65. Mr. Robbins
66. Particular puzzle
67. Without plasmas, e.g.: 2 wds.
68. AB city
69. "Things __ what they seem."
70. Get from _ __ _ (Advance slightly)
71. King: Spanish

Down

1. Harry Potter: __ Malfoy
2. Hockey, Moose, The Guess Who, Maple Syrup, Ottawa...
3. Intensely increase
4. "What __ _ thinking?"
5. Bits
6. East Central Alberta town
7. Bering, e.g.
8. Acme
9. Cake brand, with Sara
10. Spanish appetizers
11. Great tennis servers
12. Any "Corner Gas" episode now
15. __ harp (It sounds in the wind)
19. Moe __, Toronto-born jazz musician
21. "Will the __. __ able to see me?" ...wondered the patient
26. Blown-up pic
27. Alsatian artist Jean
29. A lot, in Spain
31. Selected
32. Blythe, to Gwyneth
33. Make some stuff for the meal ahead of time
35. Da Vinci or Rembrandt, for example: 2 wds.
36. City TV's neighbourly Canadian sketch comedy show
37. Mtn. blaster
40. Flute tune by #19-Down: "__' Shepherd Blues"
44. Blood-sucker, when doubled
45. Roosted
47. Alleviate
49. Pattie __-Reid, Chief Financial Commentator for CTV News
51. Space shadow
52. Less common
53. Spherical map
55. 'The Flying Finn' Mr. Nurmi
57. Sugar __, Canadian comedian
59. Attention-getter
61. US travel watchdog
63. Called-one's occupation
64. Fluffy scarf

Yesterday's Crossword

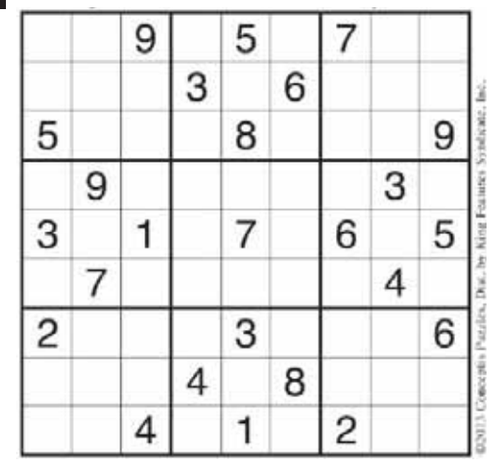


Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



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Yesterday's Sudoku

1	3	9	4	8	2	7	5	6
8	6	5	1	9	7	3	2	4
2	4	7	6	3	5	8	1	9
7	5	2	8	4	9	1	6	3
4	9	6	7	1	3	2	8	5
3	8	1	2	5	6	9	4	7
9	1	4	3	6	8	5	7	2
6	2	3	5	7	1	4	9	8
5	7	8	9	2	4	6	3	1

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